

WARREN COUNTY COUNCIL MINUTES
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2019

The Warren County Council were sworn in by Michelle Hetrick, Clerk for their first meeting of February 2019. Present for the meeting were: John Comer, Matt Commons, Sharon Hutchison, Laurie "Lee" Kay, Clay Andrews, Neil Ellis. Also, in attendance are Steve Eberly, Michelle Stuckey, Tom Hetrick, Jessie Kerst, John Larson.

1. The meeting was called to order by John Comer, Council President.

2. Pledge of Allegiance was led by John Comer.

3. New Business:

- a. Meeting Agenda Approval – There were 3 additions Williamsport Library appointment, LEDO, Warren County Foundation. Lee Kay made a motion to approve the additions to the agenda with a second from Clay Andrews, all voted in favor.
- b. Lee Kay made a motion to approve the January 28, 2019 minutes with a second from Clay Andrews all voted in favor and the minutes were signed.
- c. John Larson, Prosecuting Attorney, explained a proposed expenditure of Pretrial Diversion Funds. Larson explained the funds are generated from the diversion programs. The funds are used at the discretion of the Prosecuting Attorney. The Williamsport Town Marshall has requested help with video equipment for the town vehicle in the amount of \$5,200.
- d. Jessie Kerst, Assessor, explained the PTABOA board, processes and the appointments. The Council has 2 appointments to the board. Kerst recommended Lori Heidenreich, Treasurer, to be reappointed to the board. Kerst is in the process of finding another member to recommend to the Council. Clay Andrews made a motion to reappoint Lori Heidenreich to the PTABOA Board with a second from Lee Kay, all voted in favor.
- e. County Farm Pasture Fence funding was discussed. Tom Hetrick, Commissioner, stated that the Commissioners have discussed setting up an ongoing fund for profits from the farm to be placed and the Commissioners would spend the funds on the farm repairs. The fund would cap at \$50,000 and the overage would revert to the General Fund. Matt Commons inquired about bids for the construction of the fence as well as his concerns that he would like to see multiple bids. Commons stated concerns with the removal of all trees compared to only removing some of the brush around the pasture. Hetrick stated that ¼ mile repairs would allow for the tenant to continue using the pasture during reconstruction. The removal of the trees would allow for maintenance in the future rather than patching the fence due to downed trees and branches. Commons would like to look at the pasture and stated concerns with the fee of rental if the repairs are completed. Steve Eberly, County Resident, stated that the repairs need to be done prior to increasing the rent and current rent in the area is \$35-\$50/acre. Hetrick stated that this will not be a money maker, but we have been given this to maintain and the farm ground is profitable which can be used to maintain the pasture as well. Commons stated that in order to spend the funds on the fence, we should be maximizing the profit too. Commons would like to see potential bids as well as a new proposed rental contract. Hetrick stated that he does not have hard bids on the project, but has approximate numbers. Neil Ellis inquired if spending funds on the county farm fence would take funds from other budgeted items. Hetrick explained that the County Farm revenue is \$36,000/year average and using the revenue to build the fence would not take from other budgeted items. Hetrick additionally explained the Followell Farm Fund. Hetrick suggested clearing and rebuilding the fence in ¼ mile sections over several years. Comer explained the revenue from the County Farm has been used for budgets over the years as it is part of the revenue in the County General Fund. Hetrick stated that surplus in the County Funds has increased over the years more than the \$36,000 per year so this could be used and not hurt the County. Comer would rather spend the funds at one time to take the liability away from the cattle going through the fence as they presently are. Sharon Hutchison stated that she feels that the \$150,000 being spent on the fence is not fiscally responsible for the County as this would be using taxpayer dollars and suggested using the parcel for another purposed. Commons is requesting a draft of a potential contract for after the fence is repair with maintenance included. Ellis inquired about holding the renter responsible for maintaining the fence. The pasture is approximately 90 acres per Hetrick. Hutchison inquired about the ordinance to set up the fund. Jordan explained that the fund can be created by the Commissioners through an ordinance but the Council will need to appropriate the funds. Comer discussed an additional appropriation of funds to the newly created fund, if an ordinance is approved, in the amount of \$36,000 which would need to be in the next Council meeting. Kay suggested tabling the fence until there is more information. Sharon Hutchison made a motion to table the County Farm Pasture Fence Funding until a later meeting with a second from Lee Kay, all voted in favor. Hetrick stated that the County Commissioners are responsible for maintaining the property and the suggested funds are not taxpayer dollars that is being proposed to use for the fence, it is revenue from the County Farm. Additionally, the ordinance will be for a cap of \$50,000 and the remainder of the revenue would then go to the County General Fund. Comer explained that the additional appropriation will need to go through 2 meetings and advertised in the newspaper.
- f. Steve Eberly, LEDO and Michelle Stuckey, Community Foundation explained many grants and projects in the County that are being explored. Stuckey explained that one of the many projects includes trails in the County. The Wabash River Enhancement Corporation has proposed a trail and Niches has also proposed trails. The Wabash Heartland Innovation Network is also involved. There is a great potential for tourism in the County with the many proposed trails and canoeing. Eberly explained that the work that needs to be done is very expensive to make these items happen and inquired about possibly using the Economic Development Funds as well as grants. Eberly informed the Council of several websites to look into concerning the projects. Ellis inquired about the funds in the Economic Development Fund. Comer and Eberly explained the budgeted items and revenue.
- g. Williamsport Library Board Appointment – Lee Kay explained that Peggy Kenworthy is currently on the board and the Library Board is recommending her reappointment. Clay Andrews explained that there are 2 appointees and Jenny Larson is the other appointee. The appointment is a 4-year term. Sharon Hutchison made a motion to appoint Peggy Kenworthy to the Williamsport Library Board with a second from Neil Ellis, all voted in favor.

4. Elected Official/Officer Holder Comment:

- a. Lori Heidenreich, Treasurer, explained the County Treasurer's Monthly Report that was distributed to the Council. The report states current taxes collected to date as well as investments. Hutchison inquired about including a percentage of collected taxes with the report each month. Heidenreich explained that the abstract is awaiting approval from the State and then taxes should be printed in the next couple of weeks. Additionally, we accept partial payments year-round from several taxpayers. Heidenreich explained the investments and interest amounts.

There being no further business, Lee Kay made a motion to adjourn with a second from Clay Andrews.

ATTEST:

Robin Weston-Hubner

WARREN COUNTY COUNCIL

John Comer
John Comer, President

Sharon Hutchison
Sharon Hutchison, Vice President

Laurie "Lee" Kay

Neil Ellis

Matt Commons

George Taylor